

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace paragraph [0048] with the following amended paragraph:

[0048] The top and bottom portions 12, 14 can optionally be biased to either a closed position or an open position such that a force greater than the biasing force is necessary to move the top and bottom portions 12, 14 from the closed position to the open position to insert a spinal rod there between, or from the open position to the closed position to engage a spinal rod positioned there between. In an exemplary embodiment, the top and bottom portions 12, 14 are biased to an open position, and they are formed from a material that allows the portions 12, 14 to deform around a spinal rod 30 positioned there between to provide a secure connection between the spinal rod 30 and the clamp 10. Suitable materials include, by way of non-limiting example, ~~nitane~~nitinol, titanium, and stainless steel. To facilitate deformation of the clamp 10 around a spinal rod 30, the inferior surface 12i of the top portion 12 and the superior surface 14s of the bottom portion 14 can ~~tapered-taper~~ away from one another toward the first ends 12t.sub.1, 14t.sub.1 thereof, as shown in FIG. 1B. This allows the top and bottom portions 12, 14 to be compressed toward one another, to further provide a secure connection between the spinal rod 30 and the clamp 10. Other exemplary techniques for mating the top and bottom portions 12, 14 to one another will be discussed in more detail below.